



JEAN BAUDRILLARD 2023-01-30

THE FRACTAL SUBJECT

BIOPOLITICS,
NECROPOLITICS

BUBBLE, COMMUNICATION, FRACTAL, GENETIC, PORN,
SUBJECT

To each his own bubble; that is the law today. Just as we have reached the limits of geographic space and have explored all the confines of the planet, we can only implode into a space which is reduced daily as a result of our increasing mobility made possible by airplanes and the media, to the point where all trips have already taken place; where the vaguest dispersion, evasion and movement are concentrated in a fixed point, in an immobility that has ceased to be one of non-movement and has become that of a potential ubiquity, of an absolute mobility, which voids its

own space by crossing it ceaselessly and without effort. Thus transparency explodes into a thousand pieces, which are like the shattered fragments of a mirror, where we catch a last glimpse of our furtively reflected before it disappears. Like the fragments of a hologram, each piece contains the entire universe. It is also characteristic of the fractal object to be contained entirely in its minutest details. In this sense one can speak of the fractal subject, which – instead of transcending into a finality beyond itself – is diffracted into a multitude of identical minaturized egos, multiplying in an embryonic mode as in a biological culture, and completely saturating its environment through an infinite process of scissiparity. While the fractal object is identical to each of its elementary components, the fractal subject dreams only of resembling himself in each one of his fractions. That is to say, his dream involutes below all representation towards the smallest molecular fraction of himself a strange Narcissus, no longer dreaming of his ideal image, but of a formula to genetically reproduce himself into infinity.

Formerly we were haunted by the fear of resembling others, of losing ourselves in a crowd; afraid of conformity, and obsessed with difference. Today, we need a solution to deliver us from resembling others. All that matters now is only to resemble oneself, to find oneself everywhere, multiplied but loyal to one's personal formula; to see the same credit listings everywhere, be on all movie screens at once. Resemblance is no longer concerned with others, but rather with the individual in his vague resemblance to himself; a resemblance born of the individual's reduction to his simple elements. As a result, difference takes on another meaning. It is no longer the difference between one subject and another, but an internal, infinite differentiating of the same. Fatality today is of the order of an interior giddiness, of an explosion of the identical, of the "narcissistic" faithfulness to one's own sign and to one's own formula. One is alienated from oneself, from one's multiple clones, from all these little isomorphic "I"s...

Once each individual is contained in one hyperpotential point, the others have virtually ceased to exist. It is impossible to imagine this, just as it is futile to imagine space if one can cross it in an instant. Imagining the austral territories and everything separating you from them is futile the moment that an airplane can take you there in twenty hours. Imagining others and everything which brings you closer to them is futile the instant that "communication" can make their presence immediate. Imagining time in its length and complexity is futile the moment that any project is amenable to its immediate execution. For a primitive or a peasant, imagining that something could exist beyond his native space was impossible because they had never even had a premonition that something other could exist; this horizon was thus mentally impassable. If imagining is impossible today, it is for the reverse reason: all the horizons have already been traversed, you have already confronted all the elsewheres, and all that remains is for you to become ecstatic over (in the literal sense of the word), or to withdraw from, this inhuman extrapolation.

This withdrawal, which we know well, is that of the subject for whom the sexual and social horizons of others has disappeared, and whose mental horizon has been reduced to the manipulation of his images and screens. He has every- thing he needs. Why should he worry about sex and desire? It is through networks that this loss of affection for oneself and for others

has come about, and it is contemporary with the desert-like form of space engendered by speed, the desert-like form of the social engendered by communication and information.

There is a fractal demultiplication of the body (of sex, object, desire); seen from up close, all bodies, all faces look alike. The close-up of a face is as obscene as a sexual organ seen from up close. It is a sexual organ. Every image, every form, every part of the body seen from up close is a sex organ. The promiscuity of the detail, the zoom-in, takes on a sexual value. The exorbitance of the details attracts us, in addition to the ramification, the serial multiplication of each detail. The extreme opposite of seduction is the extreme

promiscuity of pornography, which decomposes bodies into their slightest detail, gestures into their minutest movements. Our desire reaches out to these new kinetic, numeric, fractal, artificial and synthetic images, because they are of the lowest definition. One could almost say that through a technical excess of good will they are asexual, like porn images. However, we don't look for definition or richness of imagination in these images; we look for the giddiness of their superficiality, for the artifice of the detail, the intimacy of their technique. What we truly desire is their technical artificiality, and nothing more.

The same is true for sex. We exalt the detail of sexual acts as on a screen or under a microscope, or as a chemical or biological operation. We are looking for a reduction into partial objects and the fulfillment of desire in the technical sophistication of the body. In itself changed by sexual libera-tion, the body has been reduced to a division of surfaces, a proliferation of multiple objects wherein its finitude, its desirable representation, its seduction are lost. It is a metastatic body, a fractal body which can no longer hope for resurrection.

taken from: The Ecstasy of Communication (Semiotexte)

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